

**Overcoming Impediments To Youth Participation In Hunting:
A Preliminary Evaluation Of Pilot Program Implementation Efforts**

by

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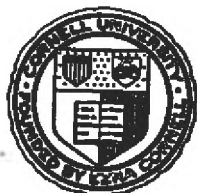
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Overcoming Impediments To Youth Participation In Hunting: A Preliminary Evaluation Of Pilot Program Implementation

INTRODUCTION

This report is one of a series presenting findings from the formative evaluation (Kraus and Allen 1987) of a pilot program developed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to overcome impediments to youth participation in hunting (see Pomerantz and Decker 1986, Enck et al. 1988, Enck and Decker 1990). Specifically, this report presents findings from the initial phase of the evaluation associated with the implementation of the pilot program. This and other brief reports to be prepared during implementation of the pilot program will provide periodic feedback on how well implementation is proceeding and any changes needed to ensure that the objectives of the pilot program can be met.

BACKGROUND

Hunting participation has declined in New York State since the early 1980's. The number of persons attending sportsmen's education courses (SECs), which is an index to hunting recruitment, has declined more than 50% since 1980. In addition, the number of hunting licenses sold in the state, which is an index of hunting retention, has declined about 30% since 1982. Brown et al. (1987) suggested that these declining trends in hunting participation will continue without programmatic intervention from DEC.

Research by the Human Dimensions Research Unit (HDRU), Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University has identified that lack of social support for hunting, especially by family members, and lack of hunting apprenticeship opportunities were 2 of the most important impediments to participation in hunting by those individuals who had an interest in hunting (Brown et al. 1981, Decker et al. 1984, Purdy et al. 1985, Purdy and Decker 1986, Purdy et al.

1989). Based on this information, a DEC task force was formed to develop a pilot program to provide social support and apprenticeship opportunities for young SEC graduates (≤ 17 years old) in Southeastern New York (DEC Region 3). Youth were chosen as potential participants in the pilot program because they represent about 50% of SEC graduates annually, and youth represent the future hunting population in New York. DEC selected Region 3 as the target area for implementation of the pilot program because the relatively large urban/suburban population in the area was expected to provide an adequate number of youth who had an interest in hunting (i.e., attended a SEC), but who did not have social support for hunting or hunting apprenticeship experiences.

OVERALL 4-STAGE EVALUATION STRATEGY

The evaluation strategy we are using is a formative approach which provides a constant review and assessment of effectiveness during all stages of the pilot from program development through implementation (Kraus and Allen 1987). This strategy provides opportunities to modify or strengthen the program as it is being developed and implemented. It also provides opportunities for understanding why various aspects of the program succeeded or failed.

Our application of this strategy has 4 stages (Decker 1988): (1) theory application evaluation, (2) program design evaluation, (3) program implementation evaluation, and (4) program outcome evaluation. Theory application evaluation is the process of examining whether a program is based on an appropriate model developed from theories and empirical evidence for the specific context in which the program is to be conducted. Program design evaluation is the process of examining a proposed program design prior to implementation to determine if the design adheres to the conceptual model. Program implementation evaluation consists of systematic monitoring of the program as it is being put into effect. Finally, program outcome

evaluation determines the impacts of a program and the reasons for their success or failure. Theory application evaluation and program design evaluation have been completed, and were presented in Enck et al. 1988, and Enck and Decker 1990, respectively.

STAGE 3: PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

As mentioned above, program implementation evaluation involves systematic monitoring of the pilot program as it is implemented. This provides the opportunity for feedback that can be used to ensure the pilot program conforms to the intended design, modify strategies that are not working well, reallocate resources if objectives are not being met, and account for time and costs. To effectively conduct this stage of the evaluation for a program that is intended to run for a relatively long period of time (e.g., >1 year), the monitoring must be continuous, and feedback must be provided periodically to allow necessary changes to be made in the program.

During the design of the pilot program, an implementation plan was developed that outlined 11 major implementation stages and a time line for completing those stages (NYSDEC 1990:10-24). The 11 stages and the estimated time frame within which they were to be completed are presented in Table 1. Program implementors have made efforts to complete parts or all of stages 1-8, and the remainder of this report will evaluate those efforts.

A table has been prepared for each of the first 8 stages showing the criteria for completion as outlined in the planning document (NYSDEC 1990), and progress made to date. The reader is cautioned to note that documentation does not exist to show progress in all cases. For example, some types of progress (e.g., obtaining assistance from support staff for typing and mailing) must be implied from other tasks completed. A narrative also is provided for each stage describing actions and events that facilitated or impeded completion of tasks.

Table 1. Major stages to be completed during the implementation of the pilot program to provide social support and apprenticeship experiences for youth who have an interest in hunting, but who are likely to participate only marginally without programmatic intervention (From NYSDEC 1990:10-24).

<u>Stage of implementation</u>	<u>Time frame for completion</u>
1. Obtain final DEC support for the pilot program	January 1990
2. Obtain NYSCC support for the pilot program	January-February 1990
3. Obtain support of sportsmen's education course instructors	February 1990
4. Recruitment and selection of master hunters	Late spring-early summer 1990
5. Screening and selection of potential youth apprentices	Late spring-late fall 1990
6. Training workshop(s) for master hunters	Summer-fall 1990
7. Notification of youth apprentices	Summer-fall 1990
8. Get-acquainted meetings between master hunters and youth apprentices	Summer-fall 1990
9. Communication between master hunters and program sponsors	Summer 1990-late fall 1991
10. Subsequent contacts between master hunters and youth apprentices	Summer 1990-late fall 1991
11. Termination of the mentoring process	Summer 1990-late fall 1991

Obtaining Support From DEC

DEC has shown interest and support for the pilot program since its conception. Initial need for a pilot program evolved from DEC concern about declining license sales and DEC-sponsored research conducted by HDRU on factors affecting the initiation, continuation, and desertion associated with hunting (Brown et al. 1981, Decker et al. 1984, Purdy and Decker 1986). Examples of DEC's support for the program during its formative stages include participation by DEC staff on a task force which developed the pilot program, authorization for travel to task force meetings, and contracting with HDRU for an evaluation of the pilot program.

The types of continued support needed from DEC to successfully implement the pilot program were outlined in the planning document (NYSDEC 1990:11, 31). Table 2 shows these needs and the actions taken to meet them. Official support by DEC for implementation of the pilot program was given in April 1990. At that time, the Sportsmen's Education Coordinator in Region 3 was appointed as the "point" for pilot program implementation. A plan was set in motion to hire a temporary staff member in Region 3 to assume the responsibilities of the Hunter Retention Specialist (HRS) whose duties were outlined in NYSDEC (1990). Also, a mechanism was established through which additional DEC support could be obtained through a senior staff member.

As shown in Table 2, not all authorized support could be provided. A State budget crisis and hiring freeze precluded hiring an HRS immediately, and no overtime was authorized for permanent staff to perform additional work. Discussions with program implementors indicated a belief that pilot program implementation was slowed because of not hiring the HRS and lack of authorization for overtime. These budgetary constraints led to a high level of frustration among program implementors because priorities for completing tasks associated with the pilot program often conflicted with other work priorities. Although these concerns may have been

Table 2. Obtaining final support from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for the pilot program: support needs and actions taken.

<u>Support needs outlined in the planning document</u>	<u>Actions taken</u>
Personnel time commitment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Region 3 Sportsmen's Ed. Coordinator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointed "point" person for pilot program, but no overtime allocated due to budget crisis.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporary Hunting Retention Specialist (HRS). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position authorized, but not filled until August 1991 due to budget crisis and hiring freeze. An appropriate title for this position could not be used. HRS also was responsible for other DEC duties that pre-empted the pilot program (e.g., working at hunting cooperative).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not specified, but implied from tasks completed.
Financial commitment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salaries Supplies Materials Mileage for travel Postage Telephone communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not specified, but at least some commitment was implied from tasks completed. One major problem was obtaining permission for mass printings and mailings, and for the amount of copying needed to conduct the program. Established senior staff member as contact person through which additional support could be obtained.

communicated and addressed through the mechanism established to handle support problems, no documentation of such action existed.

Obtaining Support From the New York State Conservation Council (NYSCC)

Support needed from the New York State Conservation Council (NYSCC) to implement the pilot program was outlined in the planning document (NYSDEC 1990:11-12, 32). These needs and the actions taken to meet them are summarized in Table 3). The Chief of the Bureau of Wildlife and other DEC staff, including those responsible for program implementation, met several times with the leadership of the NYSCC from the late 1980's through 1990 to discuss the need for a pilot program. In April 1990, NYSCC unanimously endorsed the pilot program, and a committee of 3 members was appointed to offer assistance. This committee and DEC program implementors met in July 1990 to discuss further NYSCC's role in the program.

Although official endorsement for the pilot program was offered by NYSCC, program implementors believed the pilot program was relatively low priority for the newly elected leadership of NYSCC. Implementors further believed that, with the exception of the appointed committee, support generally did not exist among NYSCC members in Region 3. NYSCC members at the county level had expressed their dissatisfaction with several DEC wildlife management programs, and in some cases indicated that they were not interested in assisting with the pilot program. Documentation does not exist to show whether program implementors addressed their concerns either with the NYSCC committee or through the mechanism established within DEC to remedy such concerns.

Table 3. Obtaining support of the New York State Conservation Council (NYSCC) for the pilot program: support needs and actions taken.

<u>Support needs outlined in the planning document</u>	<u>Actions taken</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and finalization of NYSCC roles in pilot program before full NYSCC is asked to vote for support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several discussions about the need for a pilot program occurred between Sr. DEC staff and NYSCC executive committee.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify types of support to be provided by NYSCC before full NYSCC is asked to vote. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles discussed with NYSCC and DEC representatives on 3 July 1990.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify communication channels between NYSCC and DEC before full NYSCC is asked to vote. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 3-person committee of NYSCC members was appointed to assist with presentations made to sportsmen's groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain firm commitment from full NYSCC participation in a partnership with DEC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone and in-person communication was established between the Region 3 SEC coordinator and at least 1 of the appointed NYSCC members.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NYSCC unanimously endorsed pilot program in April 1990.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NYSCC committee and DEC implementors met several times to discuss implementation procedures after endorsement was received.

Obtaining Support From Sportsmen's Education Course (SEC) Instructors

The types of support needed from SEC instructors and methods to be used for obtaining that support were presented in the planning document (NYSDEC 1990:12). Table 4 summarizes those needs and actions taken to address them. During the fall of 1990, the Region 3 Sportsmen's Education Coordinator and an unpaid volunteer contacted SEC instructors who indicated they were going to offer a course in 1990 (not all instructors offer a course in any given year). Instructors were asked to support the program by distributing apprentice screening instruments at their courses and identifying potential master hunters.

Several potential problems occurred with this process. First, lack of an HRS was perceived to be an impediment by other implementation staff because those staff had not intended to play such a large role in obtaining the support of instructors. Thus, instructors were not contacted several months before they offered courses as planned (NYSDEC 1990). Second, no formal presentation of the pilot presentation was made to instructors as a group. Presentation of the program at the annual master instructor training workshop or at annual meetings held by master instructors for all other instructors in each county could have provided a way of soliciting formal support and ensuring all instructors got consistent information. By missing this opportunity, some SEC instructors who offered a course were not contacted because some courses were offered without the knowledge of the Coordinator. Also, inconsistent information was given to the instructors. Some instructors were asked to give all students a screening instrument whereas others were asked only to give youth ≤ 17 years a screening instrument because of a perception that a limited supply of screening instruments existed.

Some of these problems were addressed in 1991 when additional information was collected from SEC graduates. The statewide coordinator for Sportsmen's Education wrote a letter to all SEC instructors in Region 3 describing the pilot program and requesting their assistance. The

Table 4. Obtaining support of sportsmen education course instructors for the pilot program: support needs and actions taken.

<u>Support needs outlined in the planning document</u>	<u>Actions taken</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional Sportsmen's Education Coordinator or Hunting Retention Specialist will contact instructors by mail in the spring prior to their offering any courses to obtain their support and assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Most instructors contacted by mail or telephone and asked for support and assistance in early fall. ● Because of problems encountered in contacting instructors in 1990, additional steps were taken in 1991 including sending letters from the State Sportsmen's Education coordinator asking instructors to help with the pilot program, and provision of return envelopes with the screening instruments distributed to instructors.

statewide Coordinator also provided business reply return envelopes for the completed screening instruments, thus providing a mechanism for retrieving screening instruments in lieu of having the HRS retrieve completed instruments from instructors. Having the screening instruments returned to the statewide Coordinator also apparently helped some instructors recognize the importance of returning the instruments.

Recruitment and Selection of Master Hunter Volunteers

One of the major elements that needed to be completed before program implementation could proceed further was the recruitment of master hunter volunteers. These individuals are

intended to provide mentoring for the youth through one-on-one contact with them. In essence, the "treatments" of apprenticeship only and apprenticeship with social support will be provided by these volunteers. About 50 master hunters will be needed; 25 for the apprenticeship and social support "treatment group," and 25 for the apprenticeship only "treatment group." Recruitment and selection of master hunters was described in the planning document (NYSDEC 1990:12-13).

Recruitment efforts were discussed several times among the DEC and NYSCC implementors, and multiple recruitment strategies were developed and tried from January–August 1991 (Table 5). Those strategies included contacting SEC instructors, presenting information about the pilot program at County Sportsmen's Federation meetings, and personally contacting individuals the implementors thought to be interested in being master hunters. Despite these strategies, only 10 volunteers had applied by September 1991. To gain insights about why so few volunteers applied, Project staff contacted officers from the meetings where recruitment presentations were made and asked the officers their perception of why the recruitment efforts were unsuccessful.

Sportsmen's Perceptions of Why Master Hunter Recruitment Was Unsuccessful

Federation officers provided 4 types of reasons about why efforts to recruit master hunters were unsuccessful: (1) communication problems, (2) liability concerns, (3) time conflicts, and (4) cost. It is important to note that none of the contacted individuals believed dislike of DEC management programs was a reason for lack of success in recruiting master hunters. The reasons provided by County Federation officials are summarized below with supporting quotes where appropriate.

Table 5. Recruitment of master hunters: recruitment needs and actions taken.

Recruitment needs outlined in the planning document	<u>Actions taken</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recruitment efforts will concentrate on reaching experienced hunters who have an interest in youth, and available time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recruitment efforts originally concentrated on reaching experienced hunters through contacts at county sportsmen's federation meetings, but later included mass mailings to area members of the National Wildlife Turkey Federation and news releases.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recruitment will entail a variety of methods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recruitment efforts involved asking SEC instructors to identify potential master hunters, presentations at County Sportsmen's Federation meetings, individual solicitation, mass mailings to area members of the National Wild Turkey Federation, and news releases.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NYSCC should guide the methodology, and should have a major role through contacts with sportsmen's organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A hiring freeze precluded assistance from an identified, potential HRS until August 1991. After that, the HRS assisted with presentations and mailings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The HRS will have an active role in recruitment by making presentations, sending out mail solicitations, and contacting SEC instructors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A potential HRS was identified, but could not be hired due to a hiring freeze.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support staff in Region 3 will be trained to answer telephone inquiries about the program. 	

Communication problems

- Advertisement about the pilot program was inadequate. "I didn't see any news releases." "Need better brochures; use pictures of people taking kids out."
- Federation delegates were counted on to relay information back to the individual clubs, and delegates "make up their own minds about what to report on."
- Not enough information was provided in the presentation to help sportsmen make up their mind about whether they wanted to participate. Because relatively little information was presented, people at the meeting perceived that "the program wasn't very important."
- No follow-ups were conducted to see if sportsmen were interested in being a master hunter. One officer indicated he had to "bug DEC to get an application." Also, additional contacts were desired between the time of the original presentation in late winter and late summer when the program was to begin. "You can't do it (presentation) only once. Make multiple contacts. Develop a newsletter to keep reminding people."
- The timing of the presentations was believed to be inappropriate by County officers. Presentations made in February were too far in advance of when the program was supposed to start. One delegate reported, "we have a whole new group of members now."

Liability concerns

- Officers were unclear about who was liable if the apprentice had a hunting accident. "What happens if the kid has an accident?" "If a child does something wrong, the adult will get sued."

Time conflicts

- Some individuals perceived that the pilot program would take up too much of their free time. "Guys are willing to take a kid once in awhile, but not every time." "The commitment for a kid is more than just 'meet me at the corner restaurant' because the kid can't drive." "Some guys don't have time to take their own kids hunting, let alone some other kid."
- Long-distance commuting, especially in urban areas, was perceived to be an impediment for some potential master hunters. This was especially true in the more urbanized areas of the Region. "Commuting parents have long days and are tired." "A hunt is not something you do after school. It's a 5 or 6 hour, whole day commitment."

- Suggestions were made to target individuals who may have more time. "It's hard for guys who are working to do the program. Retired guys may have more time."

Cost

- "There are lots of petty cash expenses when you are hunting. "Most guys can't afford to buy a kid lunch or breakfast." There was a perception that this may not be a consideration upstate because "the diners are cheaper upstate."

In August 1991 an individual was hired to fill the role of the HRS. Over the next 3 months the HRS used several techniques to try to solicit master hunter volunteers. Contacts with County Sportsmen Federations were continued without success even though those contacts previously had been unsuccessful.

The HRS also contacted outdoor writers in the area and encouraged them to write newspaper articles requesting volunteer help with the program. This technique met with limited success (2-3 master hunter volunteers responded) and was expanded further by having the DEC publicist develop a news release to be sent to outdoor writers throughout the state. Subsequent newspaper articles in Region 3 resulted in about 10 additional applications from potential master hunters.

The most successful technique for soliciting master hunters resulted from a suggestion offered by a DEC administrative staff member. Cooperation was sought and received from the state chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), and letters asking for volunteers were sent to all NWTF members in Region 3. This solicitation strategy resulted in an additional 30 master hunter applications. By 1 January 1992, 56 master hunter applications had been received.

Screening and Selection of Apprentices

Procedures for screening and selecting apprentices were described in the planning document (NYSDEC 1990:16-17). As shown in Table 6, the Region 3 Sportsmen's Education Coordinator, HRS, and HDRU staff all were to have major roles in this effort. DEC implementation staff had the responsibility of distributing screening instruments to SEC instructors prior to fall when most courses are offered and for retrieving completed instruments from the instructors. HDRU staff were to analyze the instruments, identify youth as potential participants in each of the 2 "treatment" groups, and forward names and addresses of these individuals to the HRS.

Several impediments to the successful completion of this task were identified. Because SEC instructors were not contacted as planned to obtain their support for the pilot program and to provide them with information about it (stage 3 described above), the distribution and retrieval of screening instruments did not proceed smoothly. Initial lack of an HRS, because of the statewide hiring freeze, meant that all distribution and retrieval of screening instruments had to be accomplished by other staff who faced other job priorities. A formal process of contacting SEC instructors and retrieving completed screening instruments was not followed, and relatively few screening instruments were obtained. These problems resulted in collection of incomplete data on SEC graduates in Region 3, and raised concerns about the sampling methodology used for identifying apprentices.

To overcome the lack of potential apprentices identified from the 1990 SEC, screening instruments were distributed to SEC instructors again in 1991. However, lack of an HRS until August 1991 led to similar problems with distribution as has occurred in 1990: some instructors already had offered their courses by the time screening instruments were delivered. In addition, some volunteer instructors simply did not ask students to complete the instruments. Only 733 of

Table 6. Screening and selection of apprentices for the pilot program: screening needs and actions taken.

<u>Needs outlined in the planning document</u>	<u>Actions taken</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Sportsmen's Education Course (SEC) instructors in Region 3 will be asked to distribute screening instruments to all SEC graduates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most SEC instructors were asked to participate, but conflicting information was given regarding which SEC graduates should complete a screening instrument.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunting Retention Specialist (HRS) will distribute and retrieve screening instruments from instructors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRS could not be hired immediately. Distribution was carried out by Region 3 Sportsmen's Education Coordinator. Only 348 of 3,000 screening instruments were retrieved in 1990. In 1991 the statewide SEC Coordinator retrieved 733 of 4,000 screening instruments using business reply mailers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDRU at Cornell will analyze screening instruments and identify potential apprentices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75 of 348 youth who completed screening instruments in 1990 met the criteria for participation in the pilot program. HDRU sent names and addresses of 50 (25 were selected as a control) to Region 3 in January 1991. One hundred thirty of 733 youth who completed screening instruments in 1991 met criteria for participation. Names and addresses of 87 were sent to Region 3 in January 1992.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis and selection will be completed in 4 groups: after 1/4, 1/2, 3/4, and all screening instruments are collected. This will facilitate training and pairing of master hunters with apprentices in manageable groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1990 analysis and selection occurred after 348 instruments were retrieved because the first target of 750 (1/4 of 3,000) was never reached. Similarly, in 1991 selection occurred after all 733 instruments were received.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRS will contact youth selected to participate in either of the 2 treatment groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No youth were contacted until December 1991 because of delays in obtaining master hunter volunteers

the approximately 4,000 instruments were returned by January 1992. These were analyzed, and 130 potential participants were identified. Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of 87 potential participants were forwarded to Region 3 in January 1992 (the remainder will be used as a control).

Training Workshops for Master Hunters

Training workshops were conducted for 8 master hunters on 11 November 1991 and for 11 master hunters on 12 December 1991. Training provided at the workshops was compared with the intended training outlined in the planning document (NYSCC 1990:15-16). In addition, an HDRU evaluator observed 1 of the workshops and interviewed master hunters from both workshops to assess the degree of success in training the master hunters for their role in the Pilot Program.

The observations and interviews indicated that the training workshops were successful in summarizing the Pilot Program and its intentions (Table 7). However, the training workshops were not successful in helping the master hunters understand how to carry out their role in the program. Most of the master hunters contacted said they desired additional guidance and "hands-on" instruction for how they were to operationalize the pilot program, especially the concepts of apprenticeship and social support.

Success of the training workshops could have been enhanced in 3 ways. First, the HRS could have been made more familiar with how the program was to be operationalized. Second, because the HRS did not have previous experience in running a workshop, special training for this task would have been beneficial. Finally, practice workshops or "dry runs" would have helped to identify and correct potential shortcomings before the workshops were offered to master hunters.

Table 7. Training workshops for master hunters: training needs and actions taken.

<u>Needs outlined in the planning document</u>	<u>Actions taken</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The workshops should be run by the HRS because of his familiarity with the pilot program ● Master hunters should be provided information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● why the pilot program is necessary ● knowledge about how the volunteers can be most helpful to the pilot program ● training to help them operationalize the pilot program ● Information should be provided to the master hunters about what is required to operationalize the experimental treatments "apprenticeship" and "social support." ● Information on mentoring should be taught by an expert on the subject. ● Master hunters were to be asked to detail the facilities and other hunters on which they could rely for help in carrying out their responsibilities ● Information about the types of support NYSCC could provide was to be given to master hunters. ● Information about the evaluation of the pilot program was to be given to the master hunters, including their role in the evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HRS ran the workshops. ● Master hunters were provided a summary of why the pilot program is necessary, and what it is intended to accomplish. ● A handout describing social support was included in a packet for the master hunters. ● Written information on mentoring was included in a packet for the master hunters. ● Master hunters were asked to write down the facilities and other hunters on which they could rely for assistance. ● Master hunters were told that HDRU was evaluating the program.

Notification of Youth Apprentices

Another primary implementation step was to contact potential apprentices identified through screening instruments distributed at 1990¹ sportsmen education courses. The initial lack of master hunter applicants limited the geographic area from which potential apprentices could be invited to participate in the pilot program. Only 9 of the 50 initially identified in 1990 lived in areas from which master hunters were identified. These 9 were invited to participate by mail, and only 4 of the 9 responded. The other 5 were not contacted to determine reasons for their lack of response.

A comparison was made between the needs associated with inviting apprentices to participate as outlined in the planning document (NYSDEC 1990:18-19) and the actions taken (Table 8). A nearly perfect agreement was found between the needs and actions taken, yet few youths agreed to participate. This likely occurred because the planning document was intended only as a guide to implementation and was developed without the knowledge of what situational constraints would arise during implementation. For example, conflicting demands on the HRS' time and inexperience with program management precluded development of contingency plans when mailed invitations failed to produce the desired number of apprentices. Response of potential apprentices likely would have increased if they and their parents had been contacted by telephone.

Pairing of Master Hunters and Apprentices

The final implementation stage leading up to the year long program was the pairing of master hunters with apprentices. Pairing was to be accomplished at "get acquainted" meetings as

¹An additional 87 potential apprentices were identified from 1991 SEC courses. These names and addresses were forwarded to Region 3 in January 1992, and plans were made to contact these individuals immediately.

Table 8. Notification of youth apprentices: invitation needs and actions taken.

<u>Needs outlined in the planning document</u>	<u>Actions taken</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Youths selected for participation in the pilot program will be invited by mail to participate. ● Information directed at the selected youth was to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● an invitation to attend an introductory meeting ● brief description of the pilot program ● explanation of the purpose of the introductory meeting, including an agenda ● a parental permission form to attend the introductory meeting ● a form on which to indicate transportation needs to the meeting ● instructions on what to bring to the meeting ● a stamped, self-addressed envelope in which to return the permission slip and transportation needs form. ● Information directed at the parents/guardians was to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a description of why the pilot program is needed ● an explanation that the program is not intended to make a hunter out of a nonhunter ● a summary of the benefits of hunting ● emphasis that the pilot program will continue many of the aspects covered in the sportsmen education course ● notification that the youth can stop participating at any time ● information about costs to participants ● information about the master hunter selection process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selected youths were invited to participate ● Information sent to the selected youths included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● an invitation to an introductory meeting ● a brochure describing the pilot program ● an explanation of the purpose of the meeting, and an agenda ● a parental permission form ● transportation needs were indicated on the permission form ● youths were asked to think about the types of hunting they wanted to try ● a stamped, self-addressed envelope ● Information directed at the parents/guardians included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a description of why the pilot program is needed ● an explanation that the program is not intended to make hunter out of a nonhunter ● a summary of the benefits of hunting ● emphasis that the pilot program will continue many of the aspects covered in the sportsmen education course ● notification that the youth can stop participating at any time ● information about costs to participants ● information about the master hunter selection process

Table 8 (cont.)

<u>Needs outlined in the planning document</u>	<u>Actions taken</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● an invitation to an introductory meeting ● telephone number of the HRS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● an invitation to an introductory meeting ● telephone number of the HRS

described in the planning document (NYSDEC 1990:20-23) (Table 9). Get acquainted meetings were held on 30 December 1991 and 21 January.

At the first meeting, 2 apprentices agreed to attend, but only 1 attended and was paired with a master hunter. Four master hunters attended. Evaluation of a meeting where only 1 pair was matched was difficult. Nonetheless, observations and interviews with attendees led to several important findings. First, communication with the master hunters (all of whom expected to be paired) was inadequate. All 4 master hunters expected to be paired even though implementation staff knew that a maximum of 2 apprentices would be at the meeting. Second, the observations and interviews indicated that master hunters were not well prepared to assume their roles in the program (see Training Workshops for Master Hunters on page 17). Confusion existed about whether they were to provide apprenticeship experiences or social support, how to operationalize apprenticeship and social support, and how to fill out log books intended as a record of the program. Finally, additional efforts were needed to pair a larger number of apprentices and master hunters. Implementation staff, who were frustrated at numerous setbacks in the early stages of implementation, enjoyed knowing that the program had finally been initiated. However, many other people associated with the program, including most of the trained master hunters,

Table 9. Pairing master hunters and apprentices: pairing needs and actions taken at the 2 pairing meetings.

<u>Needs outlined in the planning document</u>	<u>Actions taken at the first pairing meeting</u>	<u>Actions taken at the Second pairing meeting</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apprentices, parents, and master hunters will meet for about 30 minutes to listen to a summary of the pilot program and to have questions answered for them. Each master hunter/apprentice pair will be announced to the audience. Parents will be involved in a number of activities relating to hunting while the master hunter/apprentice meet. Master hunters and their apprentices will meet for about 1 hour to get to know each other and to begin development of the log book. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An apprentice, his parent, and several master hunters were provided a 5-minutes summary of the pilot program. The parent was shown a movie on hunting ethics, and was provided the opportunity to ask questions about the pilot program. The master hunter and the apprentice were given the opportunity to get acquainted and to discuss their future plans regarding the pilot program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apprentices, parents and master hunters were provided a 30-minute summary of why a program is needed and what the pilot program is intended to accomplish. Parents were shown a movie on hunting ethics, and were provided the opportunity to ask questions about the pilot program. The master hunters and the apprentices were given the opportunity to get acquainted and to discuss their future plans regarding the pilot program.

were disappointed that only 1 pair was matched at this meeting. There was a sense that they were "let down."

The evaluator attending the first meeting met with the implementation staff to discuss ways of increasing the likelihood of success, and several changes were made in how the second pairing meeting was presented. Additional information was presented to the apprentices and their parents, questions were anticipated rather than reacted to, and transitions between meeting segments were smoother. Another unexpected change was that the Regional Sportsmen Education Coordinator ran the meeting for the HRS who was unavailable. The Coordinator was more experienced in facilitating meetings and working with volunteers, and was able to tailor the style and specifics of the meeting to meet the needs of the attendees.

Observations at the second pairing meeting reinforced an important finding from earlier implementation stages. That is, the more training and skills a facilitator has, the better the meeting will be. Immediate feedback after the first meeting was helpful in making the second meeting more successful. However, additional training for those people involved in running the meeting (i.e., HRS and volunteers) would have improved the success of both meetings.

Changes in the Pilot Program

Two types of changes have occurred with respect to the implementation of the pilot program. One type of change has been stimulated by situations that developed during the implementation stages. These situations include both barriers to successful implementation and opportunities that can be taken advantage of. A second type of change that has occurred results directly from the formative evaluation process. As impediments are identified, the pilot program is modified to "get it back on track."

One of the most significant situational changes that has occurred in the last year is that the HRS hired in August 1991 left DEC in January 1992 for another position. This change had

the potential to be especially unfortunate because master hunter training was only partially completed and pairing of master hunters and apprentices has just been initiated. However, the formative evaluation process has had an important role in overcoming this potential problem and helping to ensure the continuation and even enhancement of the pilot program.

New criteria for hiring an HRS were drafted, including prior experience working with volunteers and experience in program management. In addition, an extensive training program has been developed by DEC administrative staff with assistance from HDRU evaluation staff to ensure the new HRS has a full understanding of the need for the pilot program, how it was developed, its research and evaluation components, as well as training in workshop facilitation. In this way, a potentially damaging situational change can be overcome by making corrective changes identified during the evaluation process.

CONCLUSIONS

Implementation has not proceeded as smoothly as planned. Not all tasks outlined in the first 8 implementation stages (NYSDEC 1990) have been completed. Several tasks that have been completed were done so behind schedule.

Many impediments to successful implementation existed. Some impediments were unforeseen and were difficult to overcome, such as the budget crisis and inability to hire an HRS. Other impediments may have been overcome by following the planning document more closely. For example, SEC instructors were not contacted prior to their busy time of year to solicit their support and assistance as described in the time line in the planning document. This had ramifications in the distribution and retrieval of screening instruments. Impediments also occurred because an implementation stage was initiated before a preceding stage was completed. Master hunter recruitment was initiated before support of the NYSCC affiliates in Region 3 was obtained even though NYSCC was to have major responsibility recruitment of master hunters.

A third category of impediments also existed: impediments for which information is lacking about whether they could have been overcome. Program implementors apparently were frustrated by their inability to hire the HRS and by the additional implementation tasks that had to be fit into an already full schedule. In addition, there was a perception that the NYSCC was not fully supportive of the pilot program. No documentation existed in either case as to whether these concerns or frustrations were communicated via the mechanism established to handle implementation concerns within DEC.

Finally, lack of documentation of tasks completed and timing of completion has limited the effectiveness of the evaluation to date. Tables 2-9 indicate that no information existed about the completion of some tasks in most implementation stages. Lack of documentation also precluded identifying strategies that did or did not work (e.g., with master hunter recruitment), and thus limited the ability of the evaluation to increase the opportunity for success of the pilot program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information presented in this report, the recommendations listed below are offered. These recommendations are intended to improve the evaluation of the pilot program, and to provide the best opportunity to modify parts of the implementation procedure to improve the chances for success of the pilot program.

1. Implementation procedures should follow those outlined in the planning document as much as possible. The task force that developed the document considered at length what needed to be accomplished, and when, to have a successful pilot program.
2. The mechanism established to handle implementation concerns (i.e., feedback through senior DEC staff) should be used as soon as concerns arise, and strategies for overcoming the concerns should be identified and initiated as early as possible.

3. Communication between the implementors and evaluators should be increased to provide better documentation of the implementation process. The increased communication should include: (1) weekly telephone communication between implementors and evaluators to discuss efforts undertaken, dates when the efforts were made, persons involved, and outcome of efforts, (2) frequent feedback from the evaluators about how well the program plan is being followed, and (3) copying correspondence about the pilot program to implementors, appropriate senior DEC staff, and evaluators.
4. A mechanism should be developed to ensure that program implementation tasks do not conflict with other work priorities.
5. The NYSCC committee established to assist with implementation should be asked to play a larger role in gaining support for the pilot program among organized sportsmen in Region 3.
6. SEC instructors who have not returned screening instruments should be contacted and asked to return the instruments if the graduates from their classes completed them.
7. Efforts to recruit additional master hunters should draw upon the information provided from County Federation officials.
8. Potential apprentices identified in 1990 should be given the first opportunity to participate in the pilot program. Potential apprentices identified from 1991 SEC courses should be provided the opportunity to participate in those counties not represented among apprentices identified in 1990.

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